



# ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2022.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

### PROGRAM INFORMATION


County: Fauquier County  
Program Title: Career Cafe  
Program Category: Community and Economic Development

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Erin M. Kozanecki  
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Erin M. Kozanecki

 Digitally signed by Erin M. Kozanecki

## VACo Achievement Awards Career Café at The Work Place, Fauquier County DSS

### **Innovative solution to a problem**

The pandemic caused job losses, by circumstance or by choice. However, with the restrictions on county and local businesses being lifted, employers are challenged with finding candidates that are either qualified and or trainable. Vacancies are up 68 percent overall, and businesses are desperate to fill open positions.

With the unique challenges of rural county living, potential job seekers do not necessarily have ready access to technology, or may not have the ability to seek employment via the internet. Further, for many unemployed due to Covid-19, returning to previous employment (or employer) may not be possible.

The Career Café addresses this issue by bringing together employers and potential employees. (Fauquier County is under no legal obligation in regards to The Career Café.)

### **Promote intergovernmental cooperation and/or cooperation with local, state and federal entities and/or a private enterprise in addressing a problem or situation**

The goal of our Career Café is to give employers and prospective employees throughout the community a chance to meet, discuss job opportunities and find employment. Held every two months, from 9:00 to 11:00 am, our Career Café encourages (lures) potential employees with coffee and doughnuts. Walk-ins are welcome, and registration is optional.

As previously stated, employers in Fauquier and Culpeper County are challenged with finding candidates to fill many post-pandemic job vacancies. The Workplace in Fauquier, along with the Career Works Center in Culpeper and Fauquier Economic Development, collaborated to help answer this need, while also addressing job seekers hesitancy when trying to find employment in this new paradigm.

The answer to this dilemma is the Career Café. This informal setting puts employers and potential employees together in a welcoming, non-threatening space. Employers come expecting to fill open positions and are encouraged to hold informal

interviews on the spot. It gives employers the opportunity to meet qualified, motivated candidates, who, if they show up to a job fair, indicate they are serious about finding a job.

Another benefit of our Career Café is that it provides a chance to meet several candidates in a short time, and interact with people from all kinds of backgrounds and possibly consider an applicant with skills that are a bit “outside the box.” The café allows employers to meet diverse candidates with solid work experience. Employers can also network with candidates who could apply in the future or refer others they know who might be interested.

The café also offers an opportunity for a company to promote its name and brand to more people and to network with other employers and possibly create relationships that lead to potential partnerships down the road.

Conversely, for job seekers, attending the café in person and interacting with the employer directly, gives them a chance to determine if the job “is a good fit,” if they are qualified even though they may not have the exact skill-match of even to gain information before deciding where they want to apply. Potential employees have the opportunity to speak directly with those making decisions about hiring, and to inquire about a company’s benefits and wages.

### **Provide a model that other local governments may learn from or implement in their own localities**

This is a low-cost program that yields great results. It does not impose a burden the County or any one agency. All advertising for the Café is donated, focusing on the use of social media, The Virginia Employment Commission, a free online newspaper, and communication with local agencies (our food banks, the health department, free clinic, libraries, homeless shelter, transitional housing) to advertise the event. Cost of the doughnuts and coffee is shared by Virginia Career Works, Fauquier Economic Development and The Work Place. Doughnuts are, on average \$9 a dozen, and typically 2 dozen doughnuts are purchased for the event and are supplied, on a rotating basis between the partners. Virginia Career Works has kindly donated the coffee for these events.

Replicating this type of event would be very easy for other counties in Virginia to do so, and would not impose a financial burden should they decided to host a Career Café.

To date, three Career Cafes have been held, in November 2021, January and March of 2022. Twelve local employers have been invited to participate in these events, and 26 job seekers have attended. Each café has seen a rise in number of attendees. The results and feedback from all attending, both employers and job seekers has been extremely positive; all have enjoyed the informal meeting experience and casual atmosphere.

As the weather will be warmer, future cafés will be held on the outside patio of the Alice Jane Childs Building in Warrenton, and will continue to bring together

employers and potential hires in a non-threatening setting. Virginia Career Works will supply the canopy to attract job seekers, to help this event's continued success. Partners from the community including representation from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and Piedmont Regional Adult and Continuing Education will be on hand to explain programs should job seekers seek information on training and education.

A success story: A recent college graduate attended the first Career Café in November 2021. "Stacey" a history major, had been working at the local big box store while job searching. Stacey met with a representative from a local water treatment and testing company at the Café and discussed open job positions. While this company may not have been a fit she felt was appropriate for her, meeting the employer in person at the Cafe allowed her to explore the potential which eventually lead to her successful employment. She currently has received a pay increase, has full benefits and is on a career track with the company. Congratulations to Stacey!